

School funding

I am seeking to reinstate the additional meeting with the Secretary of State over money for Wokingham and West Berkshire Schools that was cancelled owing to the terrorist incident recently.

I have also been asked to meet the governors of the Holt school, which I am happy to do. I do need to fit the meetings in with the Parliamentary timetable, which is why I was keen to meet this week or next when Parliament is not in session. I think now they have found a later date. I also offered dates to visit Forest School who wanted another meeting, but they did not find any of them suitable.

What I am trying to do in conjunction with some other MPs is to get the government to reconsider its new fairer funding scheme to be a bit more generous to the low funded areas like Wokingham and West Berkshire. The government's intent is correct, but the first plan does not level things up enough. I encourage all those concerned to write in to the Department for Education who are working on this issue.

Vote Green to protect local services and the environment, co-leader says



7 April 2017

***Party standing record number of candidates**

***Co-leader Jonathan Bartley launches campaign in Worcester**

***Campaign priorities listed in five point pledge**

The Green Party has pledged to protect the environment after Brexit and oppose cuts to local services as it launched its local elections campaign this morning.

Co-leader Jonathan Bartley launched the campaign in Worcester today, where Green councillors hold the balance of power [1]. The party is aiming to attract voters across the country who feel let down by other parties.

Over 90% of people in the UK live within 20km of a site protected under the EU's nature laws [2] and Green councillors will be fighting to protect the local environment after Brexit. The Green Party is campaigning for a new Environmental Protection Act to replace EU legislation [3].

The Green Party will be challenging council cuts at a local level as well as opposing an extreme Brexit. Candidates will be campaigning to stop cuts to essential services and calling for investment in affordable housing, clean transport, healthcare and education. On Worcestershire County Council, the two Green councillors have held the council to account for the building of an environmentally damaging new incinerator and for attempting to reduce bus services.

The party has unveiled a five point pledge for its local elections campaign. Green councillors will fight for:

*Local green spaces

*Decent social care

*Air fit to breathe

*Affordable homes

*Action on climate change

The Green Party is fielding a record number of candidates in the elections on May 4, with 1,561 standing across England, Scotland and Wales [4].

Bartley said:

“Brexit is an unprecedented threat to the environment and puts 40 years of legislation at risk. These laws protect our air, water and climate and they affect everyone in the UK who values our natural world.

“Our message today is clear: vote Green on May 4 and our councillors will stand up for the environment, whether they are fighting fracking, improving air quality, investing in renewable power and natural flood defences or divesting council pensions from fossil fuels.

“Wherever they are elected, Green councillors make a meaningful difference in their communities, by working with other progressive parties to improve people’s lives and oppose unnecessary cuts to local services. Everyone deserves proper social care and to live in their own home.

“The Green Party is the only party fighting both an extreme Brexit and Tory Government cuts, protecting public services locally while strengthening relationships internationally.”

Notes:

1. Worcester City Council was one of the first to adopt the Living Wage. The two Green councillors also worked with other parties to set aside money in next year’s budget to install solar panels on a council-owned multi-storey car park, generating income as well as operating electric car charging points. They also helped introduce energy efficiency measures at the Grade 1 listed Guild Hall and to plant trees in air pollution hotspots to help reduce health problems.

2. The contributions of the EU nature directives to the CBD and other multilateral environmental agreements. *Conservation Letters*, 9(6), 479-488. Beresford, A. E., Buchanan, G. M., Sanderson, F. J., Jefferson, R., & Donald, P. F. (2016).

3. <https://inews.co.uk/essentials/news/environment/caroline-lucas-accuses-government-extraordinary-complacency-brexit/>

4. The Green Party also has candidates in five mayoral elections on May 4. Will Patterson is standing in Greater Manchester, Tom Crone in Liverpool City Region, James Burn in West Midlands, Julie Howell in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and Darren Hall in West of England. Jess Mayo is contesting the Manchester Gorton parliamentary by-election.

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[Electrician fined after apprentice left with life changing injuries](#)

A Birmingham electrician has been ordered to carry out unpaid work in the community after his trainee fell three and a half metres through a plasterboard ceiling.

Birmingham Magistrates' Court heard that the apprentice electrician, Soheil Afrapour, spent 23 days in hospital after suffering head injuries. He was installing wiring above the false ceiling for Mr Soheil Alipour.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found there was no proper planning for work at height and Alipour did not fulfil his duty of care.

Soheil Alipour of Selly Oak, Birmingham, pleaded guilty to breaching Work at Height Regulations 9(2) 2005, was given 120 hours unpaid Community work and ordered to pay full costs of £1152.24.

HSE Inspector Gareth Langston said: "It's important that employers put the safety of their workers, especially young inexperienced apprentices, at the forefront of their plans and consider precautions when working at height. This incident could have been prevented if there was proper planning in place using boards above or scaffolding below."

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator

for workplace health and safety. It aims to reduce work-related death, injury and ill health. It does so through research, information and advice, promoting training; new or revised regulations and codes of practice, and working with local authority partners by inspection, investigation and enforcement. www.hse.gov.uk

2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.

[News story: Prince Harry meets Invictus Games hopefuls at UK trials](#)

His Royal Highness Prince Harry attended the UK team trials at the University of Bath Sports Training Village today, ahead of the third Invictus Games being held in Toronto, Canada this September.

More people than ever before have applied to take part in the Games, which is a multi-sport event showcasing wounded, injured and sick serving personnel and veterans. Of the 306 trying out, 212 have never taken part in the Games before but are using sport as part of their recovery and hope to be selected to represent the 90-strong UK team that will head out to Toronto.

The Invictus Games, first held in London in 2014, set out to harness the power of sport to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation and generate a wider understanding and respect for our servicemen and women who have suffered mental or physical injury.

The UK team is selected based on the benefit the Games will give an individual as part of their recovery, combined with performance and commitment to training. Getting involved in sport helps with self-confidence and feeling psychologically empowered. These significant health benefits can be translated outside of sport and into everyday life.

The UK delegation to the 2017 Invictus Games is once again being delivered by a partnership comprising the Ministry of Defence, Help for Heroes and The Royal British Legion.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

The Invictus Games promote the importance of sport in the recovery process, and provide inspiration and opportunity to our injured Servicemen and women. I saw first-hand the strength and

determination of competitors at the previous Games and I wish all those taking part in this year's trials the best of luck as they take on this challenge.

Between Thursday 6 April and Sunday 9 April, competitors are taking part in 11 sports at the trials: athletics, archery, wheelchair basketball, road cycling, golf, powerlifting, indoor rowing, wheelchair rugby, swimming, sitting volleyball and wheelchair tennis.

The MOD is a partner in the [Defence Recovery Capability](#), a programme which helps wounded, injured and sick Service personnel either return to duty from injury or provides a mechanism to help them back into civilian life – link. A key activity of the Defence Recovery Capability is the Battle Back programme, an MOD initiative that delivers an adaptive sport and adventurous training programme.

The [Invictus Games Toronto 2017](#) will take place from 23 – 30 September.

[Antiquated EU regulation obstacle to effective fight against counterfeit and pirated products industry, revealed EESC hearing on 6 April](#)

The counterfeit goods industry is detrimental to jobs and growth in Europe and deprives governments of billions in tax revenues and threatens health and security of EU workers and citizens. Nevertheless, imports of fake goods have even doubled worldwide within 10 years due to digital trade. Now it is high time for Europe's legal framework to also arrive in the 21st century. The European Commission and the Member States urgently need to adapt their legal frameworks and ensure the necessary controls and market surveillance. Consumers need to be better informed, which is even a specific fundamental consumer right codified in Article 169 TFEU. Both the private and the public sectors need to cooperate in the fight against product piracy.

This was the bottom line of yesterday's hearing on "The counterfeit and pirated products industry" to which the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) invited prominent experts from the concerned industries, as well as business and workers' associations, relevant platforms and the European Commission (EC). "*The Commission failed to come up with a robust legal framework*", said Mr Pezzini, rapporteur of the ongoing EESC own-initiative opinion on the topic. He referred to his own experience and the never-ending struggle against counterfeiting in the Italian textile sector and high tech industry, saying that Europe cannot act further with the tools

of the 20th century.

Everything can be faked. At the EESC hearing, representatives from some of the most affected industries were presented, including the leather, pharmaceutical, toy, construction and luxury sectors. These representatives reported on the challenges they have encountered in relation to counterfeiting and what they are already doing to tackle it.

Fake products cost Europeans a fortune, endangering jobs and growth

The OECD estimates the value of imported fake goods worldwide at USD 461 billion in 2013, the amount having doubled within 10 years (USD 200 billion in 2005); 5% of EU imports are fake products, amounting to EUR 85 billion. Fake clothing, footwear and accessories account for EUR 26.3 billion, which is 9.7% of the sector's turnover. The knock-on effects on supply industry revenues, however, raise this figure to approximately EUR 43.3 billion or **518 281 job losses**. Governments are deprived of around EUR 8.1 billion in tax revenues. Counterfeit handbags and luggage amount to EUR 1.6 billion or 12.7% of the sector's turnover. The leather industry is mainly based on SMEs, which do not have the capacity to tackle counterfeiting on their own. The sector has already forwarded several proposals for better regulation to the EC and, in particular, calls for as many barriers and hurdles to counterfeiting to be implemented as possible. Furthermore, mandatory leather authenticity rules (like in the textile sector), national pre-92 labelling rules for all EU Member States, an EU regulation on the labelling of leather and leather products (which currently only exists for leather footwear) and the reversal of the burden of proof are urgently needed.

Fake products threaten Europeans' security and health

The illicit trade in the construction sector is multifaceted and includes non-conformity (misleading buyers on quality, technical performance, origin, etc.); abusive use of quality labels and market access (e.g. the EU "CE-marking"), falsified certificates of conformity and violations of intellectual property rights (IPR). False products can be found everywhere, often on the internet, at flash sells, in the big construction markets and particularly in free trade zones (e.g. in Ajman at the China Mall). The industry therefore calls for the absolute traceability of any product, as well as adequate controls, market surveillance and prosecution/sanctions.

A survey in France revealed that one sixth of businesses in the construction sector were already directly or indirectly affected by counterfeit products, with the roofing, plumbing and climate engineering sector the most affected (75%).

For a layperson, it is very difficult to distinguish between fake and genuine medical products. While enterprises have already started to tackle counterfeiting, this sector also struggles with the lack of regulation and the necessary tools enabling companies to better cooperate with authorities, for instance by reporting illegal websites. Moreover, in order to stop counterfeiters effectively, more experts and specialists are needed at custom points and by police and health authorities.

The toy industry, which has one of the most vulnerable clients, namely children, faces a loss of 12.3% of its sales to the counterfeit industry, equating to EUR 1.4 billion annually as it is also one of the most innovative industries. EUR 850 million of sales are lost in related sectors, resulting in 13 168 direct and indirect job losses. Governments' tax revenue losses are estimated at EUR 370 million.

Erosion of reputation – an invaluable loss

The French family enterprise Longchamps – with 3 000 staff members worldwide (1 800 in Europe) and an annual revenue of EUR 560 million – invests around 2.5 million or 0.5% of its annual turnover and has employed a special taskforce for the fight against counterfeiting. *“Despite these huge investments, we cannot solve the problem without the necessary legal framework”*, explained Director General Jean Cassegrin, whose grandfather founded the company in 1948. He asked the EESC for its support for modern EU legislation adapted to the internet age, stating that this should also aim to demand the accountability of intermediaries, such as digital enterprises (Alibaba, GAFA, EBay etc.), banks and credit card operators and the transport industry (DHL, UPS, etc.). Some of these companies, such as EBay and MasterCard, have already started voluntary programmes against counterfeiting. Facebook is also usually cooperative. Through its legal department, Longchamps has managed to erase 472 Google pages and 2 835 Facebook accounts and has removed 8 626 advertisements in 2016 alone. For Longchamps and the other businesses affected, it is not only the monetary loss which is troublesome but also the fact that the fake industry has the potential to erase companies' good reputation and consumers' trust in platforms.

The findings of this hearing will feed in the above-mentioned EESC opinion which will be adopted later this spring. More on the hearing, as well as the presentations, are available on the [EESC webpage](#).